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der Tristan-und-Isolde-Thematik (*L'Adultera*), die Dienstethik (*Graf Petöfy*), der Streit der Königinnen von England (*Stine*), die Sirenen-Insel (*Schach von Wuthenow; Irrungen, Wirrungen*), der Totentanz (*Cécile*), die Reise in die Unterwelt (*Schach von Wuthenow; Cécile; Die Poggenpuhls; Unwiederbringlich*)" (99–100).

The author dismisses Fontane's story-telling prowess, his portrayal of social relationships, and his ear for language and diction as the source of his literary greatness. The "Zugkraft der Fontaneschen Dichtung" (10) is to be sought rather in Fontane's fascination with death and death rituals. This thesis may be a little too mono-causal for some readers, but they too will find that the study is well-argued, well-documented, and well-written. Even if one takes issue with the author's thesis, the clarity of his argumentation and the details of his presentation will elicit admiration and respect.

This is, of course, another of the many studies in recent years that seek to plumb the depths beneath the placid surface of the master's works. Those readers old enough to remember a time when one naively saw in Fontane the Prussian as poet struggling to reconcile his love for and doubts about his Wilhelmian world will again be astonished at the degree of their youthful innocence.

Marquette University —*Robert L. Jamison*

Zarathustra's Children: A Study of a Lost Generation of German Writers.
By Raymond Furness. Rochester, N.Y.: Camden House, 2000. 220 pages. $59.00.

Zarathustra had seven children: Rudolf Pannwitz, Alfred Mombert, Alfred Schuler, Ludwig Klages, Ludwig Derleth, Theodor Däubler, and Christian Morgenstern. These are the writers to whom whole chapters are devoted, following an introduction that expertly sketches Nietzsche's thought in its immediate literary-cultural impact. Born between 1870 and 1881, these men became aware of Nietzsche essentially during his final decade of life, on a sickbed tended by his sister. The theosophist Rudolf Steiner had been permitted to visit him in 1890; his description is quoted (182–83) in the final chapter, on Morgenstern: "The very passivity of [Nietzsche's] gaze, resting upon me for a long time, released my inner comprehension. . ." This sentence evokes what is implicit throughout the book, the extravagant sense this generation had of Nietzsche discipleship as a mission, a realization of what the master had left unsaid. The problem of course was that Nietzsche did not seek disciples in this sense: as soon as Zarathustra's imagery (recurrence, Übermensch, various overcomings of Christianity in favor of Life) is reified outside the book's complex structure, we are in the world of mysticism and theatrical posturing. This is undoubtedly why "Zarathustra's children" have faded as literary figures, even though some live on symptomatically, as part of the debate surrounding the origins of National Socialism: Furness gives judicious accounts of Schuler's swastika obsession, Klages's anti-Semitism, Derleth's "belief that he was to be the Savonarola of his age" (127).

Alas, Furness does not convince us (nor does he really attempt to do so) that injustice has been done by history to these authors. Already in the introduction he offers a curious program: "It is the intention of this book to see Nietzsche in a tradition of German *Dichterphilosophen* [. . .]" (5), going on to distinguish between

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the "sceptic" and the "visionary"—only the latter Nietzsche being of interest here. But the distinction is false and leads to an impossible blurring of the distinction that really counts, between good and bad writing. Furness works the Nietzsche linkage both ways: on the one hand Nietzsche is the giant, the intellectual revolutionary who inspired the generations of the 1890s and 1900s. This is certainly how his subjects saw the situation; but history has already done its sifting and named the figures who reacted with true creativity to Nietzsche's stimuli (Rilke, Trakl, Benn, et al). Very little of the esoteric posturing of the seven "children" seems interesting in itself. Most of the time Furness knows this and does not make excessive claims. But then the dread question "So what?" lurks in the reader's mind. Furness's stratagem for deflecting it is the claim of a "tradition of poet-philosophers": the post-Nietzsche landscape is worth exploring in itself, he argues, because it continues the cosmic enterprises first announced by Novalis and Hölderlin. There is obvious truth in this and the Novalis connections (primal landscapes, journeys to "the north," Sais etc.) are invariably illuminating. But it is not Furness's goal to bring specific themes into focus as "true" or in some way historically decisive; rather, his method is strictly expository, that of the museum curator taking us on a tour of (often enormous) tomes that he knows we will not read. The "So what?" is not avoided: we value Novalis and Hölderlin for their uncanny immediacy, not their esoterica; and the decisive figure for the seven writers, namely Nietzsche, loses his decisiveness, dissolving into the cosmologies of his disciples.

Furness has stylistic strategies also, distance and irony. Early we learn of Pannwitz's *Die deutsche Lehre*: "the work is unreadable in its pomposity, its arrogation of grave wisdom and priestly imperiousness" (26). And deep in Derleth's *Der fränkische Koran*, "probably the most massive block of unread fiction in twentieth-century German literature" (127), our lonely guide urges us onward thus: "It is with relief that the reader turns to *Das Buch der Geschichte* [. . .]" (142). The problem lies with Furness' core approach, exposition. The model seems to be the encyclopedia entry: each author's lifework is traversed as an entirety, with the "facts" of literary history (Jugendstil, Expressionism etc.) as simply given, a fixed background. But this method neither convinces one of these writers' intrinsic importance, nor does it allow for them to disturb established relationships through moments of verbal/intellectual brilliance. Thus lines from Däubler (cited in German; too often the poetry is quoted in English translation only) do indeed, as Furness remarks, seem "quintessentially Trakl": "Vertändelt ist das ernste Gold der Garben./Auf alten Mauern schlafen rote Schlangen." But Furness immediately disciplines himself: "To return to *Das Nordlicht* [. . .] Däubler's baggy *monstrum* [. . .]" (158–9). Obviously a book should not be criticized for not doing what it does not set out to do. But it can fairly be argued that the initial claim—that these authors respond importantly to Nietzsche's challenge—is not demonstrated. Indeed Nietzsche tends to fade out as the book proceeds. By far the most interesting material concerns "literary life" before 1914, particularly the interweaving of these writers with more familiar figures: Pannwitz with Hofmannsthal, Derleth with Thomas Mann, Klages with Musil, Morgenstern with Rudolf Steiner.

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